

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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R 291513Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8707

INFO AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMCONSUL ASMARA

SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4732

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS ET US

SUBJECT: COMMENTS OF DEFENSE MINISTER ON IEG'S REQUEST FOR
EMERGENCY MILITARY ASSISTANCE

SECDEF FOR ISA

REF: ADDIS 4557

1. SUMMARY. DURING APRIL 29 CALL AT HIS REQUEST ON MINISTER OF DEFENSE LT. GEN. ABIYE ABEBE, HE REQUESTED THAT USG CONSIDER AS MATTER OF VERY HIGH IMPORTANCE RECENT IEG REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE SAID THAT, IF USG RESPONSE TO THIS PLEA IS TOTALLY UNSATISFACTORY, THEN IEG WILL SERIOUSLY CONSIDER STRAIGHT CASH PURCHASES FROM USG. GENERAL ABIYE EMPHASIZED THAT, IN ANY EVENT, US DECISION ON TERMS FOR \$5 MILLION FMS CREDIT OFFERED FOR FY-74 IS URGENTLY REQUIRED SO THAT PROCUREMENT ACTION CAN PROCEED.

2. AFTER SOME PRELIMINARIES, GENERAL ABIYE REFERRED TO HIS LETTER OF APRIL 23 ENCLOSING REVISED LIST OF IEMF PRIORITY REQUIREMENTS (ADDIS 4557), EXPRESSED HOPE THAT EMBASSY WOULD
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SUPPORT THIS REQUEST, AND URGED THAT USG TREAT IEG'S REQUEST FOR

IMMEDIATE MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS MATTER OF GREAT AND URGENT IMPORTANCE. HE SAID ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR IN MOGADISCIO HAS REPORTED ARRIVAL OF 16 SHIPS LOADED WITH MILITARY EQUIPMENT SINCE LAST OCTOBER AND THAT RECENT SHIPMENTS HAVE INCLUDED NUMEROUS CRATES WHICH ARE BELIEVED TO ENCLOSE MIG 21'S. SOMALI PLANES ARE OVERFLYING PARTS OF OGADEN TO IMPRESS SOMALI TRIBESMEN. INTERNALLY IEG HAS GRAVE PROBLEMS TOO, PARTICULARLY SINCE ARMY IS "UNDER CONTROL AT CERTAIN TIMES BUT NOT AT OTHER TIMES". AIR FORCE HAS MANY RADICALS AND ARMY HAS SOME RADICALS, INCLUDING MAJORS AND LIEUTENANT COLONELS WHO ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH RADICAL STUDENTS. THESE RADICALS WOULD LIKE ESTABLISH COMMUNIST REGIME IN ETHIOPIA AND ARE BEING ASSISTED WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES. A MEMBER OF SOMALI EMBASSY WAS RECENTLY ARRESTED, AND THEN RELEASED, FOR PASSING OUT MONEY FOR THIS PURPOSE, AND POLISH EMBASSY HAS PASSED OUT A LOT OF MONEY.

3. I REPLIED THAT EMBASSY HAD TRANSMITTED HIS LETTER TO WASHINGTON, THAT KIFLE WODAJO HAD DISCUSSED SUBJECT WITH ASST. SECRETARY EASUM ON APRIL 22, AND THAT HIGH-LEVEL CONSIDERATION CURRENTLY BEING GIVEN TO ENTIRE PROBLEM. EMBASSY HAD GIVEN MORE ATTENTION TO ETHIOPIA'S DEFENSE NEEDS THAN TO ANY OTHER ISSUE EVER SINCE BEGINNING 1973. PROBLEM POSED BY CURRENT REQUEST IS NOT ONE OF USG'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS ETHIOPIA AND IEG, WHICH CONTINUES BE VERY FRIENDLY AND SYMPATHETIC. THE PROBLEM IS ALSO NOT REALLY THAT OF UNDERSTANDING ETHIOPIA'S NEED FOR ADDITIONAL DEFENSE RESOURCES AT PRESENT. ALTHOUGH WASHINGTON HAD BEEN SHOCKED AND DISMAYED BY LENGTH AND PRICE OF REQUIREMENTS LIST WHICH IEG HAD PRESENTED LAST MAY, IT REALIZES THAT IEG HAS GENUINE MILITARY ASSISTANCE NEEDS AT PRESENT. THE REAL PROBLEM IS SIMPLY ENORMOUS DIFFICULTY OF EXTRACTING INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR ETHIOPIA FROM A SEVERELY TIGHTENED WORLDWIDE PACKAGE WHICH IN TURN REFLECTS GREAT UNPOPULARITY WITH AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CONGRESS DURING RECENT YEARS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. I EMPHASIZED IN THIS CONTEXT SIGNIFICANCE OF MINOR GRANT INCREASES AND OF NEW CREDIT SALES PROGRAM WHICH HAD BEEN ACHIEVED FOR ETHIOPIA IN FY-74, AND HOW LARGE GRANT PROGRAM WAS IN RELATION TO GRANT PROGRAMS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND AFRICA. I WAS AWARE OF NO POSSIBILITY OF LOCATING ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR FY-74 AND KNEW THAT PROBLEM I HAD DESCRIBED WOULD STRONGLY AFFECT FY-75 PROSPECTS, BUT EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT USG WOULD CAREFULLY EXAMINE ISSUE.

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4. IN RESPONSE GENERAL ABIYE POINTED OUT THAT ACTION IS PROCEEDING ON \$11.3 MILLION GRANT PROGRAM FOR FY-74 BUT THAT NOTHING CAN BE DONE REGARDING \$5 MILLION CREDIT PROGRAM BECAUSE USG HAS NOT DECIDED ON TERMS OF ITS OFFER. PROCUREMENT UTILIZING \$5 MILLION CREDIT WOULD "AT LEAST BE SOMETHING" AND THUS DECISION ON CREDIT TERMS SHOULD BE EXPEDITED. GENERAL ABIYE THEN SAID THAT, IF IEG DISCOVERS THAT USG RESPONSE TO ITS CURRENT REQUEST

FOR EMERGENCY MILITARY ASSISTANCE IS ENTIRELY INADEQUATE, IEG WILL SERIOUSLY CONSIDER PURCHASING US EQUIPMENT ON CASH BASIS.

5. I REPLIED THAT I WOULD ONCE MORE EMPHASIZE TO WASHINGTON URGENCY OF USG DECISION ON CREDIT TERMS. AS FOR POSSIBILITY OF CASH PURCHASES, I SAID THAT IN ALL CANDOR BOTH USG AND I PERSONALLY WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO SEE IEG IN VIEW OF ITS STRAITENED FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND COUNTRY'S LOW STANDARD OF LIVING USE ITS CASH TO PURCHASE ARMS FROM USG. HOWEVER, IEG OBVIOUSLY HAD EVERY RIGHT MAKE SUCH A HARD DECISION IF IT SO WISHED. PROBLEMS I HAD DISCUSSED WITH REGARD TO GRANT AND CREDIT ACQUISITIONS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT WOULD NOT APPLY IF IEG RESORTED TO CASH PURCHASES, ALTHOUGH I KNEW THERE WOULD STILL BE SOME PROBLEMS WITH REGARD TO SOME SPECIFIC TYPES OF EQUIPMENT WHICH ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR PROMPT DELIVERY IN ANY EVENT. I SAID I WOULD EMPHASIZE IN MY REPORT TO WASHINGTON THAT IEG NEEDS AN EARLY DECISION ON ITS REQUEST IN ORDER MAKE ITS OWN DECISIONS, INCLUDING POSSIBILITY OF CASH PURCHASES.

6. COMMENT. GENERAL ABIYE'S REMARKS DIFFERED NOTABLY FROM RECENT PRESENTATION OF PRIMIN ON THIS SUBJECT IN THAT HE ENVISAGED POSSIBILITY OF CASH PURCHASES BY IEG TO SUPPLEMENT WHATEVER USG CAN OFFER ON GRANT AND CREDIT BASIS. IT WAS CERTAINLY CANDID OF HIM, AND OF KIFLE WODAJO IN RECENTLY DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE WITH ASST. SECRETARY EASUM, TO ADMIT THAT THIS PROSPECT EXISTS. IT IS ALSO STRIKING THAT NEITHER IN PRIMIN'S PRESENTATION NOR IN GENERAL ABIYE'S WAS THERE ANY REFERENCE TO IEG'S TURNING ELSEWHERE IF IT RECEIVES WHAT IT REGARDS AS INADEQUATE RESPONSE FROM USG. THIS SUGGESTS THAT PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS MORE INCLINED TO UTILIZE SCARCE CASH RESOURCES TO ACQUIRE MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM US THAN TO INAUGURATE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WITH CHINESE.

7. IN VIEW OF GENERAL ABIYE'S REMARKS I RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON

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TON MAKE ALL NECESSARY PREPARATIONS SO THAT IT CAN RESPOND PROMPTLY AND AFFIRMATIVELY IF IEG, AFTER RECEIVING USG RESPONSE TO ITS PLEA FOR EMERGENCY GRANT AND CREDIT ASSISTANCE, INFORMS US THAT IT WISHES PURCHASE ON CASH BASIS MANY OF ITEMS ON GENERAL ABIYE'S LIST.
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